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Comments on the Non-naive Social Responsibility of Intellectuals

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The furor in response to the media's presentation of Philippe Rushton's work was entirely predictable. And so was the inflammatory nature of that presentation. Some readers will recall a similar uproar in the mid-60's over Arthur Jensen's claim that heritability estimates of IQ proved a genetic basis for the average 15 point difference between Western blacks and whites.

In both cases, the public media played a key role by representing the researchers' ideas and their social implications (which the researchers did not publish or which they qualified in careful but academic style) as the WORD of SCIENCE. That is, as the final word. Public media are not designed, nor are its average consumers oriented, to characterize a scientific report as a developed hypothesis requiring serious questioning and further test. This is even less likely for a report with emotionally provocative social implications.

We all know these facts about the media and the public, of course. Yet, it must be a very academic knowledge. Over and over again, intellectuals — or academics — seem to forget the predictable consequences of media presentations of their work. Perhaps, however, they do not forget but hold the opinion that they have no responsibility for what others do with their intellectual products. I must agree that one can have no full responsibility for what one cannot control. But as was demonstrated last year by a man who had the political savvy to become candidate for president of the US, to say nothing on a topic because its public interpretation is morally or intellectually beneath oneself or beneath one's intentions for the topic, can have devastating effects for that self through public opinion. Ahh, egocentricity.

In the present case the damage goes beyond what might

accrue to the individual researcher and his theory. The greatest potential damage is to the conception of ethology's (and ISHE's) rigor and disinterestedness, as held by respected persons who might know very little about ethology: our non-ethological colleagues, our young students, and the public and officials who sponsor our work. (Please notice that there is, in the public and brief presentations of Rushton's claims, the public *appearance* of lack of rigor and of great social insensitivity. This public appearance exists even if other forms of the work should belie that appearance, and public appearance is all that these comments are meant to address.)

By here singling out public media presentations as a key contributor in the Rushton case, in past cases, and in future cases, I gingerly make three proposals for ISHE, for ethologists, and for all other socio/psychological/biological researchers:

1. That the ISHE Newsletter always carry a paragraph in a prominent place that states that no material in the Newsletter is selected by critical peer review and thus material is printed only to foster free and creative exchange of (even outrageous) ideas between researchers. That material appears in the Newsletter never implies the truth of those ideas, ISHE's support of them, nor any support for any policy implications that one might be able to draw from them.

2. That ISHE (and other intellectual organizations of social/psychological/biological researchers pass two policies (not "ethical policies," as that would assume less naivete and less egocentricity of ourselves and our peers than I believe is realistic):

- a. Formally disapproving of researchers *bringing* their work to the attention of the public media, but formally urging researchers whose work has come to that attention to stay in that area in order to clarify misconceptions and oversimplifications and, most importantly, to hold the same responsibility that one does in intellectual publications: to put forth the arguments *against* one's own position. Furthermore to urge researchers to be alert to the flavor of the particular public media contexts in which they allow themselves to be involved.
- b. Formally disapproving of statements, whether in the academic or public media, that are worded in ways that corroborate simplistic social stereotypes. Statements that could be so construed should have immediate and clear qualifications of how the simplistic stereotype is not an accurate characterization of the findings nor of persons in that category.

3. That ISHE or ethologists generally start a function that could be construed as "Ethologists for Media Responsibility." This could be a cadre of interested and media-sophisticated ethologists who would be notified when a big public media fuss appears to be showing ethology as simplistic/non-rigorous/biased/political/etc. They would quickly devise a way to get the further attention of the media to show the complexity of the real issue/methodology. They would have to be quite creative in making this non-inflammatory information attractive enough to get the expanded attention.

By making these suggestions I could be charged with lingering amounts of the same naivete and/or egocentricity that I am

deploring and trying to hinder. I wish that someone would come up with more potent ideas to address the public media problem, while still preserving academic freedom of topic, absence of censorship, and sensitivity to the harm that can be furthered by our statements about our work as well as interpretations of it.

The Study of Race Differences: A Response to Commentaries

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As a reading of the commentaries makes clear, cherished values conflict in the study of racial and ethnic differences. All of us desire a humane and decent world in which we and our children's children can live in harmony with people of different backgrounds. All of us also desire to see increases in scientific knowledge. All will differ somewhat, of course, in the weightings assigned to these values in particular instances of perceived incompatibility. More problematic, people will also differ in what they consider to be a just society and a scientific advance. It is even interesting to conjecture on the ethological influences that mold such differences (e.g., see Tellegen et al., 1988). My view, obviously, is that the study of racial group differences is important in its own right; we need to know where the differences came from and why they remain. The study of race differences may even shed light on important evolutionary processes.

First, the behavioral and morphological data, in which Caucasoids consistently average *between* Negroids and Mongoloids, can be used to help decide between alternative reconstructions of human evolution. Current thinking among physical anthropologists who use molecular biology (blood group, serum protein, mtDNA, and nuclear DNA) to buttress the paleontological data, involves a recent single-origin model for the emergence of modern humans instead of multiregional-origin models (Stringer & Andrews, 1988; Simons, 1989). An African beginning is envisaged, perhaps even as recently as 140,000 to 290,000 years ago with an African-non African split occurring perhaps only 110,000 years ago, then a European-Asian split about 41,000 years ago. Thus the sequence in which the races emerged in earth history parallels the phased linearity of the suite of *r/K* characters including brain size and intelligence test scores (Rushton, 1988). This parallel is not readily predictable from the multiregional origin models based on long periods of separation, in which no consistent pattern of character appearance is expected.

Then, there is the much neglected but intriguing question of whether there is a directional or progressive trend toward greater complexity and intelligence over evolutionary time. Bonner (1980) has shown that the later the emergence of an animal group in earth history, the larger is its brain size, and the greater is its culture. A similar trend of increasing brain size over geological time occurred with the dinosaurs during the 150 million years that they dominated the earth (Russell, 1989). It is well established that the hominid fossils show a three-fold increase in relative brain size over the last 3 million years (Jerison, 1973). And, with anatomically modern humans, it is the most recently emerged Mongoloid populations which have the largest brains and the highest IQ scores.

Should such issues as "progress" be raised in the context of human racial differences? Might they not be misrepresented and

have negative consequences? Should not a higher criterion, therefore, be placed on the expression of such views? Hans Eysenck answered these questions at the Edinburgh Meeting: (a) it is impossible to predict the consequences of advances in scientific knowledge; (b) social policies based on ignorance and incorrect theorizing are likely to be counter-productive; and (c) the use of double standards and, in effect, selective censorship is abhorrent and must be avoided. Thus we must have faith that the more open and fuller the research dialogue, the quicker will be our gains in understanding. Only in this way can the mutual respect that Eibl-Eibesfeldt writes about come into being and the technical issues raised by some of the commentators be properly addressed.

One misperception among some commentators concerns the universality of the findings. Some apparently thought the data are based primarily on negroid-Caucasoid differences in the U.K. and U.S.A. where they could be attributed to "oppression" and "imperialism". However, my research broadened the data base on race by (a) including Mongoloid samples (one-third of the world's population), (b) including other Negroid samples (most black people live in post-colonial Africa), and (c) considering many multifaceted life-history variables including brain size, maturation rate, longevity, personality, rate of twinning, sexual behaviour, and social organization. I concluded that despite much overlap the average racial group differences are to be found worldwide, in Africa and Asia, as well as in Europe and north America. Such a network of evidence allows more chance of finding valid theories than do single items. The central question thus remains: Why do Caucasian populations average so consistently between Mongoloid and Negroid populations on so many variables?

Finally it is important to emphasize that considerable variability exists within each major group, as well as within numerous subdivisions. Thus there are important individual differences to be considered over and above the average tendencies that I believe exist. Racism is the failure to acknowledge such within-group variation and to treat (usually mistreat) people in a category as though they were all the same and to deny them their human rights. Feierman is the strongest spokesperson for the belief that this is what is occurring, but it is not.

From an evolutionary point of view it is to be expected that populations will differ, genetically, in the mechanisms underlying their behaviour. Adopting such an outlook does not disconfirm the democratic ideal. As E.O. Wilson (1978) put it: "We are not compelled to believe in biological uniformity to affirm human freedom and dignity" (p. 52). He went on to quote Bressler (1968) that "An ideology that tacitly appeals to biological equality as a condition for human emancipation corrupts the idea of freedom. Moreover, it encourages decent men to tremble at the prospect of 'inconvenient' findings that may emerge in future scientific research.

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